Global plastics plan should put reuse at its centre, says REUSE Foundation

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REUSE Foundation calls for improvements to the 2030 Plastic Agenda. Noting that signatories to the Global Commitment on plastic packaging fell short of their own 2018 targets on *every metric*, it calls for the successor 2030 Plastics Agenda to build on lessons learned over the last 8 years. It argues that instead of promoting recycling, effort should be put behind plastic abatement strategies known to be most effective, specifically reuse.

LONDON, 16 November 2026 — The 2030 Plastics Agenda is set to become the world's leading voluntary plastics framework and main global yardstick for plastic packaging, but risks repeating the shortfalls of its predecessor, according to a new independent review published today by REUSE Foundation.

The 2030 Plastics Agenda: What It Gets Right, and Where It Could Go Further examines the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's (EMF) 2030 Plastics Agenda for Business against eight years of results from the Global Commitment it succeeds. Following the collapse of the UN plastics treaty talks in August 2025, the review argues the 2030 Agenda now carries more weight than ever, and deserves a close, constructive look.

Key findings

The review credits the 2018 Global Commitment as a landmark: more than 1,200 organisations, covering roughly 20% of the global plastic packaging market, ultimately agreed for the first time to be measured publicly against shared numbers. But set against what signatories themselves promised, results fell short:

[illegible] target

[illegible] (in plastic reduction market rose 13%)

[illegible] up (from 4.2% in 2018

[illegible]able, recyclable or compostable packaging

[illegible] (2019) rose 2% (2024) and retailers)

Four of the ten largest consumer goods signatories — Kellogg, Mars, PepsiCo and Coca-Cola — reported increases in virgin plastic use. SC Johnson was a rare exception, cutting virgin plastic by 33% against a 30% target.

On the new 2030 Agenda, REUSE Foundation finds:

- **Reuse lacks firm backing.** Businesses are asked to “create the conditions for reuse to scale”, with no number, deadline or funding pledge — even though EMF-supported research (*Breaking the Plastic Wave*, 2025 update) finds reuse could deliver two-thirds of the reduction needed to nearly eradicate packaging pollution by 2040.

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Plastics Crisis :: Circularity :: Plastic Recycling :: Reuse :: Refills :: Plastic Pollution :: INC :: INC 5.2 :: Global Commitments :: 2030 Plastics Agenday :: EMF ::

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- **Funding favours the least impactful option.** The only funded commitment in the 2030 Agenda is for collection and recycling infrastructure, yet plastic recycling is widely recognised to be a poor option (most collected plastic is not recycled and recycled plastic is mostly downcycled) and global plastic recycling capacity is unable to keep up with rising plastic waste.
- **Chemical recycling is not ruled out.** The 2030 Agenda talks about flexible packaging "material innovation" but does not define it. This leaves the door open to pyrolysis, which independent reviews find mostly turns plastic into fuel.
- **A single metric hides how progress is made.** In a shift from the Global Commitment that required signatories to identify how they'd made progress, brand and retail signatories in the 2030 Agenda will report virgin plastic reduction alone. This means we lose the ability to see how companies are making progress (format changes, packing material changes, reuse…) and will reward a shift to lighter but harder-to-recycle flexible formats.
- **Targets still vary widely,** from SC Johnson's 55% virgin plastic reduction to Carrefour's 10% on own-brand single-use packaging, goals are voluntary and wide-ranging. A few ambitious companies mask the poor performance of less ambitious ones.

The review also asks EMF to present headline claims — such as "avoided 14 million tonnes of virgin plastic" and "tripled recycled content" — alongside the targets they are measured against to provide an objective measure of performance.

What REUSE Foundation is calling for

Roger Sharp, Trustee at REUSE Foundation, said:

"The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has done more to put circularity on the global agenda than any other organisation, and the Global Commitment was a genuine first. But eight years on, signatories fell short of their own goals on every metric. With no global treaty in place, the 2030 Agenda will be the reference point companies, governments and journalists rely on. It's worth getting right."

"The evidence, including EMF's own, says reuse matters most. Yet it's the area with the least concrete backing in the new plan. SC Johnson and L'Oréal have already shown reuse works at scale when businesses commit to it. Imagine what the 2030 Agenda could unlock if reuse sat at its centre rather than its edge."

The review recommends that the 2030 Agenda:

1. Clearly articulate signatory performance against Global Commitment targets so it's easy to see where performance fell short and why
2. Puts reuse at the centre, with numeric targets, deadlines and funding.
3. Explicitly rules out chemical recycling as a flexible packaging pathway.
4. Keeps granular reporting so the route to virgin plastic reduction stays visible.
5. Sets a common minimum ambition level for signatory targets.

REUSE Foundation says it will continue making this case with EMF, businesses, NGOs and policymakers.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. The full review, *The 2030 Plastics Agenda: What It Gets Right, and Where It Could Go Further*, is available here.
2. Figures are drawn from EMF Global Commitment Progress Reports (2019–2025), the 2030 Plastics Agenda for Business (November 2025), *Breaking the Plastic Wave* (2020 and 2025), and independent assessments of chemical recycling by NRDC and Beyond Plastics/IPEN.
3. Global Commitment data is self-reported by signatories and has not been audited or verified by EMF or UNEP.
4. UN negotiations on a legally binding plastics treaty (INC-5.2, Geneva) ended without agreement in August 2025. No date has been set to resume talks.

About REUSE Foundation

REUSE Foundation, a UK-registered charity, works to cut plastic packaging waste by scaling reuse, the

most powerful approach available. The Foundation conducts research, prepares policy papers and runs field programmes. Its work includes:

The groundbreaking *Refill Works* campaign that aims to prove reuse can work at scale for low-income communities. Supported by a Forbes-list entrepreneur and philanthropist, the novel solution will launch in rural India early next year.

REUSE.IQ, the first global database of reuse businesses fighting plastic waste. The free, research-grade database catalogues more than 800 reuse and circular-economy organisations worldwide, giving researchers, investors, and policymakers a single source to track the businesses working to prevent single-use plastic waste

The charity recently secured National Lottery funding for its Community Hub Refills, an innovative effort to test whether community hubs, food banks, clubs and similar centres can host affordable refills of everyday household and personal care products.

Learn more at reusefoundation.org.

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